

From: Peter Olsen
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/7/02 7:24pm
Subject: Comments on the Microsoft Settlement

I believe that the proposed settlement is fundamentally flawed.

I think that the settlement as now written will further entrench Microsoft's monopoly position and will not be in the public interest.

I believe that Microsoft's exercise of its monopoly power has harmed me both personally and professionally. I believe that I am still being harmed.

1. I believe that Microsoft has used its monopoly power to charge me predatory prices. In particular, I believe Microsoft has used its monopoly power to implement business practices designed to drive competing products (such as DRDOS, among others) from the market so that it can set prices unilaterally.

2. I believe that Microsoft has supplemented these monopoly business practices with technical measures designed to reduce or eliminate my ability to use alternative products. In particular, I believe that Microsoft has used its monopoly in operating systems to prevent competition in its Office applications.

3. I believe that Microsoft has designed its products to make it difficult or impossible to recover my own data for my own use in any form other than that designed for use by its own products. In particular, Microsoft has refused to release the file formats in which my data is stored by its applications, thus preventing me from using other programs, even ones I design and build myself, to further process the data.

I do not believe that this settlement does anything to remedy the injuries Microsoft has done to me personally.

I do not believe that the proposed settlement addresses my injuries in any way.

I believe that any solution involving the provision of software or hardware to the public schools should:

1. allow local school authorities to purchase software and hardware from any source whatsoever, and
2. as a condition for the use of any Microsoft software, require Microsoft to publish without restriction the full technical specifications of any software it provides, including, but not limited to, all application programming interfaces and file formats.

I believe that this latter point is particularly important for any plan aimed at improving the public education. True education requires understanding. The goal of education is to prepare students to understand and cope with new circumstances. To do this, students must come to know the fundamental principles underlying software design and implementation, not just how to manipulate screen images. This type of knowledge is best imparted by providing students with actual examples of working programs and then allowing them to extend or expand them.

If Microsoft truly wishes to improve education, then Microsoft will provide the information about its application programming interfaces and file formats to make that improvement possible. If Microsoft does not do so, then I believe that it should exercise no control over how the money is to be spent.

In particular, schools should be free to spend all of it on hardware and then choose free software, such as RedHat Linux, if they wish. I believe that this will be a much better solution.

Peter Olsen